



# Guidelines for Calculating Educational Environment for PennData Reporting



The purpose of this document is to guide individualized education program (IEP) teams in calculating the Educational Environment in Section VIII of the IEP, for PennData reporting.



## Importance of Accurate Educational Environment Reporting

Every state is required to provide an annual report of specific data related to the education of students with disabilities to the U.S. Department of Education. In Pennsylvania, this information is gathered through the PennData reporting system. Data are compiled by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), Bureau of Special Education (BSE), verified for accuracy and forwarded to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) at the U.S. Department of Education within required timelines.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004), Pennsylvania's State Performance Plan (SPP), and the Gaskin Settlement Agreement have heightened the need for accurate reporting of Educational Environment data. Educational Environment data from each student's individualized education program (IEP) are compiled by the local education agency (LEA) and reported to their respective intermediate unit (IU) for verification of accuracy, and then reported to the PDE/BSE via the PennData reporting system. If Educational Environment data are not reported accurately by the IEP team, the LEA data may not reflect an accurate representation of the LEA's Educational Environment. Inaccurate data reporting may result in negative results for the LEA such as adverse reporting on the Special Education Data Reports as not meeting SPP targets, resulting in possible negative determination status and misidentification for Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Monitoring.



## Identifying Environment

Educational Environment reporting is not an indication of the amount of special education service that a student with a disability receives. Following are the fundamental principles for reporting educational environments:

- If a student is physically placed within an educational environment where students without disabilities are receiving instruction, it is a **general education setting**.
- Instruction that occurs outside the classroom, such as within the school or community where interaction occurs with persons without disabilities and includes nondisabled peers and community members, is a **general education setting**.
- If a student is educated outside a general education school building for more than 50 percent of the day, is receiving instruction in an Approved Private School, Private, Other Public, Hospital/Homebound, Correctional, or Out of State Facility, or Instruction Conducted in the Home, it is considered an **other setting**.



## PennData Reporting: Educational Environment - Section VIII of the IEP Form

There are two parts to Section VIII of the IEP. Each IEP team must select only **one** Educational Environment for the student, and complete either Section A or Section B. As a reference, approximately 96 percent of students with disabilities in Pennsylvania are educated in general education school buildings with nondisabled peers, thus reported in Section A.

VIII. PennData Reporting: Educational Environment (Complete either Section A or B; Select only one Educational Environment)

To calculate the percentage of time inside the general education classroom, divide the number of hours the student spends inside the general education classroom by the total number of hours in the school day (including lunch, recess, study periods). The result is then multiplied by 100.

Section A: For Students Educated in General Education School Buildings with Nondisabled Peers - Indicate the percentage of time inside the general education classroom for this student:

Time spent outside the general education classroom receiving services unrelated to the student's disability (e.g., time receiving ESL services) should be considered time inside the general education classroom. Educational time spent in age-appropriate community-based settings that include individuals with and without disabilities, such as college campuses or vocational sites, should be counted as time spent inside the general education classroom.

Calculation for This Student:

Column 1	Column 2	Calculation	Indicate Percentage	Percentage Category
Total hours the student spends in the general education classroom per day	Total hours in a typical school day (including lunch, recess, and study periods)	(Hours inside general education classroom ÷ hours in school day) x 100 = % (Column 1 ÷ Column 2) x 100 = %	Section A: The percentage of time child spends inside the general education classroom:	Using the calculation result - select the appropriate percentage category
			_____ % of the day	<input type="checkbox"/> INSIDE the general education classroom 80% or more of the day <input type="checkbox"/> INSIDE the general education classroom 79-40% of the day <input type="checkbox"/> INSIDE the general education classroom less than 40% of the day

Section B: This section required only for students educated outside general education school buildings for more than 50 percent of the day - select and indicate the name of the school or facility on the line corresponding with the appropriate selection: (If a student spends less than 50 percent of the day in one of these locations, the IEP team must do the calculation in Section A.)

- ☐ Approved Private School (Nonresidential)
- ☐ Approved Private School (Residential)
- ☐ Other Private Facility (Nonresidential)
- ☐ Other Private Facility (Residential)
- ☐ Other Public Facility (Residential)
- ☐ Other Public Facility (Nonresidential)
- ☐ Hospital/Homebound
- ☐ Correctional Facility
- ☐ Out of State Facility
- ☐ Instruction Conducted in the Home

Examples for Section A: How to Calculate PennData-Educational Environment Percentages

	Column 1 Total hours the student spends in the general education classroom per day	Column 2 Total hours in a typical school day (including lunch, recess & study periods)	Calculation (Hours inside general education classroom ÷ hours in school day) x 100 = % (Column 1 ÷ Column 2) x 100 = %	Indicate Percentage Section A: The percentage of time child spends inside the general education classroom:
Example 1	5.5	6.5	$(5.5 \div 6.5) \times 100 = 85\%$	85% of the day (Inside 80% or more of day)
Example 2	3	5	$(3 \div 5) \times 100 = 60\%$	60% of the day (Inside 79-40% of day)
Example 3	1	5	$(1 \div 5) \times 100 = 20\%$	20% of the day (Inside less than 40% of day)



## Examples of Educational Environments: Guidance for IEP Teams

Example	Rationale for Consideration of Environment	How to report this time on the IEP?
General education classroom all day with 1:1 paraprofessional support provided to student 100% of day	Paraprofessional support is an IEP team decision related to the specially designed instruction that a student needs. It does not impact Educational Environment calculation or reporting.	Complete Section A.
Student receives specialized instruction in a full-time special education classroom, taught by special education teacher	This is special education delivered physically outside of the general education environment.	Complete Section A.
Speech therapy delivered in separate therapy room	This is special education delivered physically outside of the general education environment.	Complete Section A.
Integrated speech therapy within the general education classroom, provided by speech and language therapist	This is special education delivered inside the general education environment.	Complete Section A.
General education classroom with co-teaching	Co-teaching is an instructional strategy that is provided to all children inside the general education environment.	Complete Section A.
Alternative Education program - "general education" if the students with disabilities and nondisabled peers are educated in the program	An alternative education environment that includes both students with disabilities and nondisabled students is a general education environment.	Complete Section A.
Educational time spent in age-appropriate, community-based setting, which includes individuals with and without disabilities (e.g., vocational sites, supermarkets, colleges)	Time spent in community environments with nondisabled peers and community members is a general education environment.	Complete Section A.

<b>Example</b>	<b>Rationale for Consideration of Environment</b>	<b>How to report this time on the IEP?</b>
Correctional facilities	Students are not being educated in general education schools.	Complete Section B. Not applicable to time calculated in general education buildings. Write the name of the correctional facility in the space provided.
One-on-one orientation and mobility instruction in halls and stairs of general education school building with vision therapist	Considered general education.	Complete Section A.
Recess with nondisabled students	Recess is part of the school day and participation alongside nondisabled students is a general education environment.	Complete Section A.
Recess with only students with IEPs	Since no general education students participate, this activity is a special education activity outside the general education environment.	Complete Section A.
Peer buddies visit the special education classroom	Even though students without disabilities are physically within the special education classroom, the instruction is still performed by a special education teacher in a special education setting.	Complete Section A.
Field trips	Field trips do not occur as part of the typical school day schedule for students.	This does not impact Educational Environment reporting.
Flexible grouping (e.g., for reading instruction)	Flexible grouping is an instructional strategy that does not impact Educational Environment reporting as long as groupings are based on skill levels of all students, with and without disabilities.	Complete Section A.
Instruction Conducted in the Home	Instruction Conducted in the Home is the most restrictive setting along the special education continuum of services.	Complete Section B.

Example	Rationale for Consideration of Environment	How to report this time on the IEP?
Students engaged in job training in sites within the school setting	Training in actual work settings is considered general education.	Complete Section A.
Instruction in a sheltered workshop	This is a segregated setting.	If the student is in this setting more than 50 percent of the time, complete Section B of the IEP, checking the box denoting "other public facility, nonresidential." If the student is in this setting less than 50 percent of the time, complete Section A.
Lunch in the cafeteria	Lunch is part of the school day and there are opportunities to interact with students without disabilities.	Complete Section A.
Lunch in special education classroom with students with IEPs	Lunch is part of the school day; however, because there are no opportunities to interact with students without disabilities, the student is outside the general education environment.	Complete Section A.
Other locations (e.g., APSs, Public Separate Facilities)	These settings are not general education school buildings.	If the student is in this setting more than 50 percent of the time, complete Section B of the IEP, checking the box denoting "other public facility, nonresidential." If the student is in this setting less than 50 percent of the time, complete Section A.
Charter Schools	Charter schools are considered LEAs, thus considered general education school buildings.	Complete Section A.
Cyber Charter Schools	Cyber Charter schools are considered LEAs. This is considered the same environment in which students without disabilities are enrolled.	Complete Section A.

Reminder: Section A of the IEP is completed for students educated in general education buildings with students without disabilities. Statewide, this group represents approximately 96 percent of all students with IEPs. Section B is completed for students educated outside general education school buildings more than 50 percent of the day.



# Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

**Tom Wolf**  
Governor

For additional information about PennData Reporting,  
please visit the PennData website at  
<http://penndata.hbg.psu.edu>  
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